



Supporting Carers Now and Into the Future State Budget Submission 2012 – 2013

Carers SA is the recognised 'voice of carers' representing the interests and needs of family carers in South Australia.

Contact:
Rosemary Warmington, CEO. Telephone: 8291 5600.
Email: info@carers-sa.asn.au.
Website: www.carers-sa.asn.au.

'Being a carer we put others first, often putting aside our own extra comforts.' Carer.

One in eight Australians are carers. Access Economics (2010) calculated that carers provide an estimated 1.3 billion hours of informal care, representing a replacement cost of \$40.9 billion.

Carers represent some of the most disadvantaged members of South Australia's community, often as a direct result of taking on the caring role.

Carers should be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family, social and community life, employment and education.

Carers SA's submissions and responses are developed through documented research, surveys and other input of members, discussions by Carers SA policy working groups and focus groups of Carers and service providers.

Recognition of South Australian Carers

- This State Budget Submission 2012-2013 makes twenty-one recommendations to improve services, resources and support to South Australian carers. In addition we refer Government to the attached background paper entitled, *Carer Opportunity and Choice: Budget Challenges*, which provides a comprehensive outline of initiatives required to support carers in this state.
- South Australia has legislation that recognises carers: the South Australian *Carer Recognition Act 2005*, SA Carer Policy and Carers' Charter.
- The Australian Government's *Carer Recognition Act 2010* and National Carer Strategy (FaHCSIA 2011) forms part of the Australian Government's National framework.
- Carers SA acknowledges the growing State Government commitments to family carers who provide unpaid care and support for a family member or friend who has a disability, chronic physical or mental illness or who is frail aged.
- The value of the contribution of carers to the state is \$3.2 billion because of the caring roles they undertake (Access Economics 2010). State Government support enables the continuation of that contribution.

Recommendation One

Within the scope of the SA *Carer Recognition Act 2005* and the SA Carer Policy, that there be further development of 'joined up' approaches across government agencies to include all Government Departments.

Recommendation Two

Carer impact statements be established and applied in policies and programs of relevance to carers.

Recommendation Three

That South Australian family carers be independently recognised as valued and supported in targets in the State Strategic Plan and not subsumed within other populations such as volunteers.

Services that Support Carers

- Family carers have diverse needs, which can change over a lifespan, requiring specialised assistance through flexible and responsive supports to maintain their family, workforce and community connections. Specific carer support programs enable carers to continue to care over the longer term. The value of such assistance cannot be overstated.
- Research shows that carers in rural and remote South Australia face particular barriers to engagement and assistance including isolation, limited transport services and reduced employment options.
- A network of regional carer support organisations plays a vital role for carers providing a foundation for connecting carers with each other and with other services.
- There is an important need for these programs to be able to offer and deliver a range of services to all carer cohorts across the carer life journey, with no thought to the individual carer's age, ethnicity or ability and at a variety of times to suit individual needs. However, limited resources and funding restrictions do not make this possible.

Recommendation Four

A broadening of funding and criteria regimes for regional carer support organisations through comprehensive resourcing from across government portfolios such as Health, Ageing, Regional Development, Primary Industries, Communities, Social Inclusion and Disability.

Respite Support

'I finally decided I had to look at residential respite. After the red tape, three months down the track we got Alex booked in for two weeks, almost having a breakdown while waiting.' Carer, Margaret, SA Carer June 2011.

- Getting respite – having a break - from their caring role is a major factor in enabling carers to care over the long term and to make 'work/life balance' choices about participation in education, work, leisure and community engagement.
- Respite services are still not meeting the needs of carers due to the lack of flexibility, accessibility and cost.
- Carers in regional South Australia experience considerable difficulty in accessing respite due to higher costs, travel times, availability and locality (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2009).
- A flexible respite system across key Health, Disability and Ageing portfolios is needed to be responsive to the needs of carers and the care recipient. Current respite options are inadequate or not appropriate for the care recipient.
- Respite services need to be increased significantly to meet the unmet needs of carers.

Recommendation Five

Provision of additional monies for respite for carers within the Health, Ageing, Disability and Communities and Social Inclusion portfolios and broaden the eligibility criteria within existing programs.

Recommendation Six

Increase budget expenditure on respite for carers as per the recommendation of the South Australian Social Inclusion report *Strong Voices: a blueprint to enhance the life and claim the rights of people with disability in South Australia (2012-2020)*.

Health, Ageing and Young Carers

'As we grow older we do think about the future for our adult daughter and what will happen once we go.' Port Augusta carers, SA Carer December 2011.

- South Australian family carers contribute an estimated 64 million hours of caring each year valued at \$3.2 billion (Access Economics 2010). The Government relies on out of home care and programs to reduce costs, but all of this comes at a long term health cost to carers. To balance the 'health ledger' a comprehensive carer strategy is required within health.
- Carers in South Australia are at risk of higher rates of chronic health issues and disability. Research of South Australian carers demonstrated that 69.8% of carers have at least one chronic health condition as compared to 49.1% of non-carers.
- Carers lower socio-economic status is a predictor for poorer health outcomes.
- Young carers are children or young adults, aged from as young as six years to twenty-five years who are commonly caring for a parent, sibling or grandparent. Many of these young carers are in single parent households and juggling school, tertiary education with demanding caring responsibilities.
- Carers identify their General Practitioner as important in providing information and referral to other services, but this is currently inadequate and needs improving.
- Carers SA advocates for a partnership approach to the delivery of healthcare to carers, with a priority focus on primary and preventative health care initiatives.

Recommendation Seven

Targeted partnerships in research and health service delivery focussing on identifying ways of addressing health inequities for carers.

Recommendation Eight

Increase training and education for clinical recognition and awareness of a young carer, with assessment and identification of young carers' health and emotional wellbeing.

Recommendation Nine

Establish health initiatives to identify the young carer and provide a whole of family approach.

Recommendation Ten

To support initiatives in the community sector for young carers that reduce social isolation and that improve their health and wellbeing.

Education - Young Carers

- In South Australia there are 30,300 children and young people - young carers - who take on the role of caring because of family responsibilities beyond what could normally be expected of a child. This includes the physical, emotional and intimate care for parents, siblings, partners or children.
- In taking on a caring role, young carers put their own lives and futures on hold.
- Schools are a critical point of intervention in improving the life chances of young carers through building capacity and resilience.
- Young carers who leave school place themselves at risk of not being able to undertake further education or of entering the workforce. Research shows that compared to 23% of the general population, only 4% of young primary carers go on with education past the age of sixteen years.
- Transition support into further education and the workforce needs to be complementary to school based intervention.

Recommendation Eleven

The establishment of a policy, and its implementation, for young carers within primary and secondary education that takes into account their educational needs so as to improve their educational outcomes.

Recommendation Twelve

Development of schools based, interdepartmental young carers program that integrates family focussed schools and community based programs.

Community Services and Social Inclusion

Accommodation and Housing

- A very high proportion of adults with mental illness are extremely dependent upon their family for the most basic of everyday tasks and long term support.
- Ageing carers experience reduced capacity to continue intense and demanding caring roles which involves providing accommodation, social and health support and other living requirements for their adult children.
- Ageing carers have a critical need to find safe, affordable and supported accommodation for their adult children with psychiatric disability. This needs to be in conjunction with additional social supports to relieve ageing parent carers who experience immense challenges in providing care for their adult sons and daughters.
- Recognition of carers, particularly ageing carers is required, in the assessment of accommodation support needs of adult children who are heavily reliant on their parents for care.

Recommendation Thirteen

To recognise and include the reduced capacity of ageing carers, to continue to provide housing and associated living supports to their adult children, in the assessment and provision of social housing and supports for people with a mental illness.

Recommendation Fourteen

Provide a priority pathway to social housing and service supports within mental health programs for people with mental illness who are reliant on their ageing parent carers for their daily care and support.

Disability

- The Federal Government's commitment to a National Disability Insurance is welcomed by carers and people with a disability alike. The South Australian Government agreed commitment to working with the Federal Government to support the reforms is critical to its success.
- The State Governments report *Strong Voices: A blueprint to enhance life and claim the rights of people with disability in South Australia (2012-2020)* makes 36 very sound recommendations that carers and consumers want introduced as a matter of priority.
- The report highlights the needs of elderly parents caring for their adult children with disability and the need for 'future planning' assistance.

- Carers SA welcomes the announcement by the Attorney General to make amendments to the *Evidence Act* to make it easier for evidence to be taken from vulnerable witnesses, such as children and adults with a disability, in criminal matters.

Recommendation Fifteen

Implement all the recommendations of the South Australian Government's *Strong Voices: A blueprint to enhance life and claim the rights of people with disability in South Australia (2012-2020)*.

Recommendation Sixteen

Implement recommendations 104 and 105 of Robyn Layton's (2003) report to ensure the South Australian *Evidence Act 1929* be amended to afford children with disability the right to justice, including those with poor verbal skills.

Anti-poverty - Financial Support

- Many South Australian carers are living in poverty, struggling to meet the increasing cost of living and rising associated costs of caring. Improving concessions and subsidies to help meet extra costs is a top priority for carers.
- While governments play an important role providing concessions and subsidies, nevertheless, due to the rapidly increasing rate of utility price rises, carers and many other South Australians are not finding adequate relief from these concessions and subsidies (SACOSS 2011). Many Carers also miss out on these concessions as they do not 'meet' the eligibility criteria.
- The blueprint '*Strong Voices*' supports the implementation of initiatives to reduce the financial pressures on carers and families of people with a disability.

Recommendation Seventeen

Provide increases in concessions and subsidies to meet the ongoing rises in the costs of living for carers, including an immediate doubling of utility concessions.

Recommendation Eighteen

Implement recommendation sixteen of the *Strong Voices: a blueprint to enhance the life and claim the rights of people with disability in South Australia (2012-2020)* to reduce the financial pressures on families and carers of people with disability.

Regional Communities

- Carers in regional, rural and remote communities play a vital role in caring for their loved ones in their homes and provide support with all aspects of care, including transport.
- Limited resources and funding restrictions create barriers to meeting the needs of carers, particularly those in remote regions of South Australia.
- Carers in regional, rural and remote South Australia face barriers to accessing support due to isolation, lack of employment opportunities and a limited transport service.
- Carers in regional, rural and remote South Australia have higher rates of chronic health issues, disease and disability with accompanying financial hardship and disadvantage.

Recommendation Nineteen

Increase funding to carers in regional, rural and remote South Australia to enable access to services and resources, and build on existing successful regional carer support programs.

Recommendation Twenty

Increase levels of funding to expand and improve availability and access to respite services to carers in regional, rural and remote South Australia.

Recommendation Twenty-one

Improve transport options to carers and those they care for who are living in rural and regional communities in South Australia.

Bibliography

Access Economics 2010, 'The economic value of informal care in 2010', report for Carers Australia.

Australian Institute of Family Studies 2009, *The tyranny of distance*, Commonwealth of Australia and Carers Australia, Canberra.

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) 2011, *National Carer Strategy*, Commonwealth of Australia.

Gill, T, Jury, H, Avery, J, Warmington, R, Stacey, A & Taylor, A 2007, *The health and wellbeing of adult family carers in South Australia: an epidemiological analysis 1994 – 2004*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide.

Layton, R 2003, *Our best investment: a state plan to protect and advance the interests of children*, Government of South Australia.

SACOSS 2011, 'Cost of living update No. 7', South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS), Unley.

Social Inclusion Board 2011, *Strong voices: a blueprint to enhance life and claim the rights of people with disability in South Australia (2012-2020)*, Government of South Australia.